

Birth to 6 Months

FEEDING & SWALLOWING MILESTONES

These milestones cover feeding and swallowing development in children.



Each child develops uniquely, even within the same family, and may meet certain milestones earlier or later than others. If your child does not meet many of the milestones within their age range, visit www.asha.org/profind to find an ASHA-certified speech-language pathologist (SLP) for an assessment.

Birth to 3 Months

What can my baby do?

- ☐ Holds head up when supported.
- ☐ Turns head towards nipple and opens mouth.

How does my baby eat and drink?

- ☐ Latches to nipple.
- ☐ Sucks and swallows.

What should my baby be eating and drinking?

- ☐ Human milk and/or formula.

4 to 6 Months

What can my baby do?

- ☐ Brings hands to the breast or bottle.
- ☐ Pats breast or bottle.
- ☐ Brings hands or toys to mouth.
- ☐ Starts to sit up in cradle position and holds breast or bottle during feeding.
- ☐ Sits supported in highchair with straps and when reclined.

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How does my baby eat and drink?

- ☐ Opens mouth for spoon.
- ☐ Uses tongue to move food to back of mouth for swallowing.

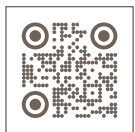
What should my baby be eating and drinking?

- ☐ Human milk and/or formula.
- ☐ Infant cereal mixed with human milk or formula*.
- ☐ Smooth baby foods (purees) with no lumps or chunks.

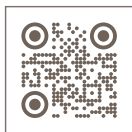
What can I do to help?

You know your child best, so don't wait to get help if your child is having trouble breastfeeding, bottle-feeding, or eating solid foods. Getting help early can prevent problems with eating and can foster a healthy relationship with food for you and your child.

*Consult with pediatrician regarding appropriate infant cereals.



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6 to 12 Months

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6 to 9 Months

What can my baby do?

- ☐ Holds head up when sitting upright.
- ☐ Leans forward to receive foods.
- ☐ Still needs support from highchair around waist and legs, including footrest.
- ☐ Reaches for toys and food.
- ☐ Picks up food with fingers.
- ☐ Brings food to mouth with hands and starts to feed self.
- ☐ Tries to hold spoon.

How does my baby eat and drink?

- ☐ Starts to drink from a cup but may bite cup edge or straw; some liquid spills out of mouth.
- ☐ Drools less.
- ☐ Moves food around mouth using tongue.
- ☐ Munches (chews food by moving jaw up and down).

What should my baby be eating and drinking?

- ☐ Human milk and/or formula; may start drinking small amounts of water.
- ☐ Smooth baby foods (purees) with some lumps (minced and moist) like mashed potatoes, applesauce, oatmeal, or pudding.
- ☐ Soft, chewable, solid foods cut into strips like a pancake, toast, or cheese.

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9 to 12 Months

What can my baby do?

- ☐ Holds bottle or sippy cup with both hands.
- ☐ Sits upright in highchair with minimal assistance.
- ☐ Holds spoon during meal.
- ☐ Feeds self with fingers.

How does my baby eat and drink?

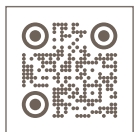
- ☐ Takes a small bite from a larger piece of food.
- ☐ Begins chewing food on both sides of mouth (called “rotary chewing”).
- ☐ Closes lips during swallow.

What should my baby be eating and drinking?

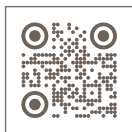
- ☐ Soft, bite-sized foods like sliced banana, cheese cubes, or pasta.
- ☐ Human milk and/or formula; may drink small amounts of water.

What can I do to help?

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12 to 18 Months

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What can my child do?

- ☐ Sits upright with feet on floor or on a flat surface (can sit in highchair, booster seat, on floor, etc.).
- ☐ Feeds self with utensils or fingers.
- ☐ Drinks from a sippy cup without help; can drink from an open cup with some spilling.

How does my child eat and drink?

- ☐ Uses tongue to move food from side to side in mouth.
- ☐ Drinks from straw without help and without spilling.

What types of food should my child be eating?

- ☐ Foods made of mixed consistencies, such as a sandwich or chicken noodle soup.
- ☐ Human milk, pasteurized whole milk, water.

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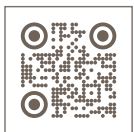
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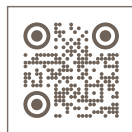
- **Help your child learn their hunger and fullness cues.**
This creates healthy eating habits and a long-term positive relationship with food.
- **Children learn through play, so expose them to new foods by making meals exciting or playful.** For example, have a picnic lunch outside, or finger paint with applesauce.



Serve a variety of foods to your child. Don't get discouraged if they don't like it the first few times.



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18 to 24 Months

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What can my child do?

- ☐ Sits without support.
- ☐ Feeds self with fingers or utensils.
- ☐ Drinks from a small cup with hands and has minimal spilling.

How does my child eat and drink?

- ☐ Consistently chews food on both sides of mouth.
- ☐ Moves food around mouth, chews, and swallows without spilling.

What types of food should my child be eating and drinking?

- ☐ Foods that require a lot of chewing, like chicken breast. Child still requires adult to cut more challenging foods into smaller pieces to prevent choking.
- ☐ Human milk, pasteurized whole milk, water.

What can I do to help?

You know your child best, so don't wait to get help if your child is having trouble breastfeeding, bottle-feeding, or eating solid foods. Getting help early can prevent problems with eating and can foster a healthy relationship with food for you and your child.

- **Help your child learn their hunger and fullness cues.** This creates healthy eating habits and a long-term positive relationship with food.

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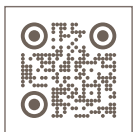
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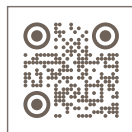
- **Children learn through play, so expose them to new foods by making meals exciting or playful.** For example, have a picnic lunch outside, or finger paint with applesauce.
- **Serve a variety of foods to your child.** Don't get discouraged if they don't like it the first few times.
- **Have your child try a new food many times**—this gives them the chance to decide if they like it.
- **Ask your child to try new foods,** but don't bribe or push your child too much. Pushing can cause your child to have negative associations with the act of eating—or with food in general.
- **Cook with your child.** Share new smells and tastes. Cooking together can make tasting new foods exciting when your child knows that they helped to prepare it!



Build on what your child already likes to eat by taking food one step further. For example, if they like chicken nuggets, try a chicken patty.



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2 to 3 Years

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What should my child be able to do?

- ☐ Feeds self with fork and spoon, although often still uses fingers.

How does my child eat and drink?

- ☐ Drinks from an open cup without spilling.
- ☐ Chews all foods, including those with tougher textures, without gagging or choking.

What types of food should my child be eating and drinking?

- ☐ Most crunchy, hard or mixed food textures, but parents should avoid offering foods that carry a choking risk—like popcorn, hotdogs, or grapes. Child still requires adult to cut more challenging foods into smaller pieces to prevent choking.
- ☐ Human milk, pasteurized fat-free or low-fat milk, water.

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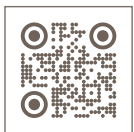
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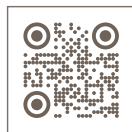
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